

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BOTH Jews and Christians receive the Old Testament as containing a revelation from God, while the latter regard it as standing in close and vital relationship to the New Testament. Everything connected with the Old Testament has, of recent years, been subjected to the closest scrutiny—the authorship of its several books, the time when they were written, their style, their historical value, their religious and ethical teachings. Apart from the veneration with which we regard the Old Testament writings on their own account, the intimate connection which they have with the Christian Scriptures necessarily gives us the deepest interest in the conclusions which may be reached by Old Testament criticism. For as the New Testament dispensation presupposes and grows out of the Mosaic, so the books of the New Testament touch those of the Old at every point: “*In vetere testamento novum latet, et in novo vetus patet.*”

We propose to take a summary view of the testimony of our Lord to the Old Testament, as it is recorded by the evangelists. The New Testament writers themselves largely quote and refer to the Old Testament, and the views which they express regarding the old economy and its writings are in harmony with the statements of their Master; but, for various reasons, we here confine ourselves to what is related of the Lord Himself.

Let us refer, first, to what is contained or necessarily implied in the Lord's testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures, and, secondly, to the critical value of His testimony.

out, must not the consequence be fatal? The Old Testament and the New are inseparably bound together, and the giving up of one must be followed by the giving up of the other. Nor is this a mere inference. It is sustained by facts. There is no case on record in which men have given up the Old Testament and then for any length of time retained the New.

Hence the unutterable importance of this question of the composite authorship of the Pentateuch. We are told often enough that it is a mere question of criticism and may be settled one way or the other, *salva fide*. We do not think so. It is a question which ultimately bears heavily upon the point whether we have a divine revelation and whether the Bible is such a revelation. To have either of these points determined adversely is the greatest calamity that could befall the Church or the world.

NEW YORK.

TALBOT W. CHAMBERS.

THE ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

It cannot be but that great good will result from the mere fact of the Assembly's meeting on the Pacific coast. The journey across the Continent and the reception accorded the delegates both along the route and in flourishing and hospitable Portland, have given those who attended this meeting a clear and distinct impression of the greatness of our country and of its needs. On the other hand, the visit of the highest court of the Church to the extreme West has manifested the unity of the Church throughout the whole land, and set its vital blood flowing more strongly into the extremities.

A very large portion of the time of the Assembly was unavoidably consumed in hearing and issuing the appeal of the Prosecuting Committee, appointed by the Presbytery of New York in the matter of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America against the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., against the judgment of the Presbytery of New York dismissing the case. A number of nice points of interpretation of the new *Book of Discipline* were involved in the entertaining of this appeal; and the Assembly properly expended much patience in determining the matter. The interpretations which it gave are, in general, obviously right, and will stand as much-needed precedents in subsequent cases. That a Prosecuting Committee has the right of appeal is involved in the equitable right of both original parties to an appeal to the superior judicatories. The confusing difficulties of the present case seem to have arisen out of the vacillation of the Presbytery of New York rather than out of the nature of the case. That an appeal may be taken immediately from Presbytery to Assembly is involved in the definition of an appeal in the *Book of Discipline*, Sec. 94, in contrast with the definition of a

complaint in Sec. 83, as well as in the explicit terms of Sec. 102; and it, of course, belongs to the supreme court to which the appeal is carried, to determine in what circumstances such a departure from the ordinary course of a case is justified. It is, perhaps, not so obvious whether a dismissal of a case is a "final judgment" in the sense of the *Book of Discipline*, Sec. 94; but this is a point that can only be settled by the interpretation of the supreme judicatory; and it has probably been wisely determined affirmatively by this Assembly. The appeal, having been entertained, was after full discussion, sustained by an overwhelming vote in every specification, the finding of the Assembly being as follows:

The General Assembly having, on the 28th of May, 1892, fully sustained all the specifications of errors alleged and set forth in the appeal and specifications in this case, it is now, May 30, 1892, ordered that the judgment of the Presbytery of New York, entered November 4, 1891, dismissing the case of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America against the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., be and the same is hereby reversed, and the case is removed to the Presbytery of New York for a new trial, with directions to said Presbytery to proceed to pass upon and determine the sufficiency of the charges and specifications in form and legal effect, and to permit the Prosecuting Committee to amend the specifications of charges not changing the general nature of the same, if in the furtherance of justice it be necessary to amend, so that the case may be brought to issue and tried on the merits thereof as speedily as may be practicable.

This was clearly the proper disposition of the case. And it illustrates the fact—however much the action of the Presbytery of New York may have been dictated by a desire for peace and quiet—that, in judicial proceedings as well as in morals and mathematics, the shortest line between two points is usually the straight one.

Next to this appeal, the Assembly gave most time and patience to the difficulties which have grown out of the exercise by the Assembly of 1891 of its right of veto upon the appointment of Dr. Briggs to the Edward Robinson Professorship of Biblical Theology in the Union Theological Seminary. This matter came regularly before this Assembly, not only through the usual report of Union Seminary to the Assembly, by which it appeared that notwithstanding the veto of the last Assembly Dr. Briggs had been retained in this Chair; but also through the report of the Committee appointed by the last Assembly to confer with Union Seminary, and a parallel report made by the Seminary at this Committee's request, which united in recommending that the fact be recognized of an irreducible difference of interpretation of the compact of 1870 between the Assembly and Seminary, as regards the application of the veto to transfers from one Chair to another. A supplementary report from so many of the Committee of Conference as were present at the Assembly proposed arbitration as the only practicable method of settling, in a fraternal manner, this difference of interpretation. A memorial from Union Seminary was also presented, requesting the Assembly to "concur in annulling the

arrangement of 1870." The arguments by which this request was supported can scarcely be thought convincing. One was, that "the one and sole aim of the concession of the veto power made by Union Seminary was the peace and harmony of the Church," and that the effect of its exercise had been rather to break this peace and harmony. The statement itself is inadequate; but is it, in any event, the exercise of the veto power, or the resistance of Union Seminary to it, which is chargeable with the breach of peace and harmony in the Church? Another argument was that the veto power is useless for its purpose and not thought necessary in other spheres of Church work, as is evidenced *inter alia* by the fact that "the Assembly has no veto power over the appointment of a pastor;" as if the whole settlement and transference of pastors were not under the control of the Presbyteries—the courts to which church affairs are reported as the Seminary's affairs are reported to the Assembly. As to the request itself, to "concur in annulling the arrangement of 1870," the Assembly could not, of course, yield to it. Such a procedure would introduce that inequality in the relations of the Seminaries to the Church which was recognized as intolerable when the negotiations for the Reunion of the Old and New School Churches were in progress, and without adequate pledges for the removal of which that Reunion was fully understood to be impossible. The generosity of Union's concession of the existing measure of control by the Assembly of her appointments, consisted just in this—that by engaging to concede this control, or by withholding it, it was in the power of the Seminary to enable or to prevent the consummation of Reunion; and it chose the generous path of concession and thereby rendered Reunion possible. It ought to be generally understood: 1. That it was held to be intolerable that the Assembly of the Reunited Church should have direct control of the elections to the professorships in the Old School Seminaries and no control over them in the New School Seminaries. 2. That Reunion could not, therefore, have been consummated without sufficient pledges that all the Seminaries should be placed under something like equal ecclesiastical control. 3. That these pledges were given in the "Concurrent Declaration," and carried out immediately; the concession of the veto power by Union being the act by which, on its part, they were carried out. That the requirements as to Theological Seminaries were not made part of the Reunion contract itself, but only a debt of honor (if we can say "only" in such a case), did not lead the fathers of the Reunion period to feel them any less binding. 4. That the ecclesiastical control actually conceded by Union Seminary in the proposition of 1870, was less, not more, in amount than had been contemplated in any plan that had been in discussion before Reunion had been consummated—the Reunited Church meeting the generosity of the Seminary by generously yielding to its representations as to the legal difficulties in the way of the concession of a veto upon the election of directors. 5. That to annul this arrangement of 1870, as regards

Union Seminary, would reintroduce the same inequality in the ecclesiastical relations of the Seminaries, pledges of the removal of which were a prerequisite of Reunion; and that such an inequality would be as intolerable now as it was then. Above and behind all this there stands also the manifest duty of the Church, as guardian of the doctrinal purity of its ministry, to retain some efficient direct control of the institutions in which its candidates are trained, a duty safeguarded by the requirement of the *Form of Government* that candidates shall be placed under the direction of "approved" teachers. In these circumstances the action of the Assembly could not be doubtful. But the generosity of the form in which it was taken passes all precedent; as, indeed, in all the discussions and in all the rulings of the Moderator, generous kindness towards a great institution which (however mistakenly) felt itself aggrieved, was allowed the fullest play. The text of the finding of the Assembly is as follows:

Having regard to the Overtures and all the papers in the case, the Assembly takes the following action:

1. That the Assembly indorses the interpretation of the compact of 1870, as expressed by the action of the Assembly of 1891.
2. That the Assembly declines to be a party to the breaking of the compact with Union Theological Seminary.
3. That the Assembly is persuaded that the Church should have direct connection with and control over its theological seminaries.
4. That the Assembly appoints a committee of fifteen, consisting of eight ministers and seven ruling elders, to take into consideration the whole subject of the relation of the Assembly to its theological seminaries; to confer with the Directors of these seminaries; and to report to the next General Assembly such action as will result in a still closer relation between the Assembly and its seminaries than that which at present exists.
5. That the Assembly dismisses the Committee of Conference appointed last year with courteous thanks for its faithfulness, and highest appreciation of the services it has rendered the Church.

As to the interpretation of the compact of 1870—for "compact" it is, as the Moderator clearly showed—so far as it relates to its application to transfers from Chair to Chair, the Assembly went to the very extreme of generous concession. In the nature of the case, the compact must cover transfers; no Chair can possibly be filled without an election or appointment to it. The elaborate arguments to the contrary, propounded by the papers presented by Union Seminary, are themselves enough to evince this. "If," says one of these papers, "Dr. Briggs was not elected under the conditions prescribed by our laws observed in all other cases of election," then he was not elected at all." "A professor can be elected in this institution," says the other paper, "only in accordance with our laws. And according to these laws Dr. Briggs was not elected." Such reasoning may raise the query whether, according to the laws of Union Seminary, the Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology has ever been filled: but they can scarcely prove that a transfer of a professor from

another Chair to it was no "election or appointment." The Assembly would have been thoroughly justified, therefore, in abiding by its obviously correct interpretation of the reach of the compact. But with the utmost stretch of generosity it adopted the recommendation of the portion of the Committee of Conference present at Portland, and proposes to the Seminary an arbitration of the disputed point. Here are the supplementary resolutions, to which every Presbyterian will assent, as marking the triumph of affectionate charity over the claim of right, however just :

Resolved, 1. That this General Assembly recognizes the *status quo* as to the different interpretation given by the Directors of Union Seminary from that given by the Assembly's Committee of Conference, and in accordance with the proposition suggested by said Committee of Conference, this General Assembly agrees to submit the difference of interpretation of the compact of 1870 as to transfers, to a Committee on Arbitration.

Resolved, 2. That a committee of five members representing this Assembly shall be appointed by the Moderator, which shall select five other persons as arbitrators to meet a like number selected by Union Seminary ; and these ten shall select five others ; and by the fifteen thus chosen shall the interpretation of this compact as to the transfer of a professor be decided.

We are sorry that the dealing of the Assembly with the Report of the Committee on the Revision of the *Confession of Faith* cannot command an equal commendation. It was a grave error to reject Mr. Junkin's motion to refer the report, "under the provisions of the third section of the amended Chapter xxiii of the *Form of Government* adopted June 1, 1891, to a committee constituted out of the membership of the Revision Committee in accordance with said section." To speak of that section as an "*ex post facto* law" in its bearing on the present report, is strangely inaccurate. All that has hitherto been done with reference to the revision of the *Confession* is extra-constitutional and follows the provisions of the book neither before nor after the amendments to it proposed in 1890, and made law in 1891. This procedure has justly been defended on the ground that the provision of a mode of action by the Assembly in proposing revisions to the Presbyteries, cannot prevent the Assembly from seeking all the light it desires, from Committees or Presbyteries, prior to the action itself. But certainly the progress of this endeavor to seek light prior to action, cannot afterwards be pleaded as already the action itself begun. Now, at this Assembly, the action itself was to be inaugurated, and the law of the Church distinctly provides that : "Before any amendments or alterations of the *Confession of Faith* or the *Larger* or *Shorter Catechisms* proposed by the General Assembly shall be transmitted to the Presbyteries, the General Assembly shall appoint—to consider the subject—a committee of ministers and ruling elders, in number not less than fifteen, of whom not more than two shall be from any one Synod, and the committee shall report its recommendations to the General Assembly next ensu-

ing for action." In transmitting to the Presbyteries a huge body of overtures proposing amendments or alterations to the *Confession of Faith*, without taking this measure prescribed by law to be taken *before such amendments are transmitted*, the Assembly has indubitably acted illegally. The lameness of the answer of the Assembly to the protest of Mr. Junkin, Dr. B. L. Agnew and others against this illegality, is the sufficient proof of its reality. This answer urges that the previous action shows "a very close, if not entire, compliance with the constitutional provisions referred to in the protest"—which seems a somewhat veiled admission that the compliance has not been "entire." And if, as is said in this answer, "the continuance of the Revision Committee by the General Assembly of 1891 was the equivalent of a new appointment," the case is even worse; for why, in this "new appointment," was the committee not conformed to the requirements of the amendment to the *Form of Government* which became law at that very Assembly, if this committee was anything more than an extra-constitutional advisory committee of the Assembly's? It is distressingly easy to forget legal niceties in zeal for the completion of a work which has cost us much labor. This was strongly illustrated by the amazing proposition of the Chairman of the Committee in presenting the report—that the Committee be continued and whatever of its overtures may be rejected by the Presbyteries of this year be referred back to it, "in order to recast them with the additional light furnished it by the different Presbyteries." "These," urged the Chairman, "can be further amended and referred to the Presbyteries next year: by this means the Assembly may soon settle the Confessional agitation and secure another opportunity to put the objectionable overtures in a form acceptable to all." The Committee must surely think that the Church exists for it, not it for the Church.

Apart, however, from the illegality of sending down these overtures without regard to the requirements of the *Form of Government*, the haste with which the whole matter was disposed of, without that careful consideration which becomes a great court in proposing alterations in its fundamental law, cannot be too much regretted. The tenderness before the prospect of criticism of its work which members of the Committee of Revision have been prone to show, was exhibited here too. In commending the report to the Assembly, the Chairman is reported to have made the remarkable request included in the following strange passage—strange, in view of the obvious duty of the Assembly to propose no changes in the *Confession* which it had not itself sifted and criticised and approved in every word: "When a large Committee like that of Revision has done its work, strictly within the restrictions laid down by the body that appointed it, it is no more than common courtesy to accept its report and send it down for confirmation or rejection by the Presbyteries. The Committee never supposed that the Assembly would desire to take up the overtures in detail, or to enter largely into the discussion of the re-

port as a whole. I should greatly regret a suppression of discussion; but I would at the same time deprecate extended debate on the separate overtures, because I am sure that it would be impossible for this Assembly or any committee of the same to reach in that way satisfactory conclusions." Accordingly, the debate had scarcely begun, when another member of the Committee moved the previous question, under the pressure of which this flood of unconsidered proposals to alter the *Confession of Faith* was precipitated upon the Presbyteries. To say the least of it, this was scarcely decorous, and it has naturally aroused very widespread and just disapproval.* The engagement of the Assembly's time and efforts in other important matters, and the difficulty thence arising of finding space for the consideration of these numerous overtures with that minute and detailed care which surely the Church had the right to expect of its supreme court before it proposed so many changes in the *Confession*, might justly have been pleaded as a reason why the Assembly should refuse to transmit them to the Presbyteries, especially after it had been pointed out that immediate action upon them was unconstitutional; but no such plea, and indeed no plea at all, can justify the frivolity of this wholesale proposition of alterations for the *Confession*, practically without any consideration at all.

This would of course be true, even were there nothing objectionable in the proposed alterations. How could the Assembly assure itself that it was proposing nothing objectionable? The Committee seemed to think that its personal assurances as to the fact ought to be sufficient. It will have been noticed that in the extract from the Chairman's speech which we have already quoted, he assigns as a reason why the report should be accepted and sent down, that it has been strictly conformed to the restrictions laid down by the appointing Assembly, and both he and other members of the Committee, with some iteration, asserted that in the judgment of the Committee the "integrity of the Reformed or Calvinistic system of doctrine taught in the *Confession of Faith* had

*The following editorial references to the haste with which the Revision report was pushed through the Assembly, will give some idea of how it has impressed our chief weekly journals. "Even the report on Revision, which two years before had been the supreme question, and the interest in which was now to culminate, was passed almost without debate, so eager were all to come to the great conflict over the Briggs case."—*The Evangelist*, for June 2, 1892. "The whole matter was rushed through at a rate which almost took away one's breath."—*The Presbyterian*, for June 8, 1892. "On the Revision report action was taken last night in a hasty manner that was discreditable, and that has caused a wide feeling of indignation. . . . This has produced a feeling of contemptuous anger."—*The Presbyterian Journal*, for June 9, 1892. "A proceeding that cannot be justified took place . . . when a motion to send down the report of the Revision Committee to the Presbyteries was under consideration. . . . This important report was rushed through without any opportunity for discussing its merits. It is not strange that widely spread and deep indignation has been manifested."—*The Presbyterian Banner*, for June 1, 1892.

not been impaired by any change reported." But how was the Assembly to know this? Should such important matters be taken on the mere *ipse dixit* of any committee? Why not let the work speak for itself on this point? Unfortunately, however, when the work is interrogated for itself, it does not give forth such a certain sound. We do not purpose to go here into an examination of the character of the changes proposed. We have tried to point out their real nature in the last number of this REVIEW, to which we venture to refer the reader.* It will suffice to say here that all of them are not indifferent to the Calvinistic system: and that the body of the doctrinal changes, taken together, exhibits a distinct tendency to lessen the sharpness and strength of the expression of that system in the *Confession*. This cannot be successfully denied. The defense put in, is not that these changes do not, as far as they go, infringe on doctrines necessary to the integrity of the system; but that they do not remove *all* the safeguards of the system. Thus Dr. Herrick Johnson, replying† to our strictures on the omission of the words "and those only" from x. 1, as words necessary to the guarding of the doctrine of Effectual Calling, as taught in the Bible and the *Confession*, does not deny the necessity of the words to the guarding of the truth, but replies that they are retained in iii. 4. But if the words express a truth, and a truth necessary to the integrity of the system, several questions arise—as, *e. g.*, What is the necessity or gain of omitting them? and especially, Does not their omission here leave the doctrine of Effectual Calling in x. 1 insufficiently defined? We press this last question, for it is the core of the whole matter. Through this Revision report, whether intentionally or not, there throbs an assault upon the Calvinistic doctrine of Vocation, and a recommendation of the Arminian doctrine of universal sufficient grace. Here is where, next after sovereign preterition—with which (as Mr. Gilman's letter, read in the Assembly, shows‡ he at least understands) the doctrine of Effectual Calling is inseparably bound up—

* Pp. 322-330.

† In *The Interior*, for May 26, 1892.

‡ This (for a professed Calvinist) remarkable letter objects, first to the doctrine of sovereign preterition, and then to the closing words of vii. 3: "and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe." It remarks that this statement "is part and parcel of the preterition theory." This is true enough. And that is to say, that the denial of sovereign preterition not only must involve the denial of sovereign election—that God has ordained any to eternal life; but must involve also the denial of special and efficacious grace, effectual calling, and as a foundation for it, the passivity of man in regeneration and his inability in sin. For if God has passed by no man in the distribution of His grace—in the gift of the Holy Ghost to make them willing and able to believe—then it inevitably follows, either that this gift saves all effectually (and that is Universalism) or else that it is not effectual to salvation (and that is the Arminian doctrine of sufficient universal grace). He who begins by denying sovereign preterition must end in either Universalism or Arminianism.

the assault upon Calvinism always begins. It was here that our Congregational brethren began their defection from Calvinism, when, on adopting in 1648 the *Westminster Confession* as their doctrinal standard, it was already with the distinct provision that the statement therein of the "Doctrine of Vocation" was not "to bind apprehensions precisely." It is to be sincerely hoped that the desire of multitudes among us to relieve the *Confession* of the possibility of misrepresentation as to the fate of infants dying such, will not mislead them into accepting along with an appropriate alteration of x. 3, the general scheme of alteration proposed by these overtures in vii. 3, ix. 3, x. 1. 2, 3, 4—which, as a whole, is calculated, so far as it has any effect at all, to wear down the sharpness of our Calvinistic (and Scriptural) doctrine of Effectual Calling, and its involved doctrine of man's Inability in his sin.

The report of the Committee on a *Consensus Creed* seems also to have been accepted with too little discussion. This report really registers the failure of the project, and this should have been recognized and the committee discharged from further unprofitable labor. A glance over the list of sister Churches who have undertaken to unite in the effort to form such a "consensus creed," will show not only how few of them have responded favorably, but also that those who decline to take part in the movement are often the very churches with which we are in closest harmony. Our sister Presbyterian Churches in the United States, for example, are conspicuous for their absence; and the same is true of those foreign Churches with whose doctrinal witness and condition we are most in sympathy, such as the Irish Presbyterian Church and the Christian Reformed (or Free) Church of Holland, as well as its small but worthy American representative. The Church does not desire a creed presenting its consensus with the Cumberland Presbyterian Church (which has doctrinally no more right to be numbered among the Reformed Churches, in a historical sense, than has the Methodist Episcopal Church) and its dissensus (for this, such a "consensus" would inevitably show) with our nearest kindred, such as the Presbyterian Church, South.

The report of the Committee exhibits, however, also a grave error in its procedure. It reports the preparation of a creed, which, however, it did not present to this Assembly for approval. The gravity of the error of proceeding to frame a "consensus creed," however tentative, apart from the coöperation of the other Churches which were invited to assist in the work, is illustrated by the very proper complaint of Dr. T. W. Chambers, a delegate from one of these Churches to this Assembly. "Such a creed," he writes to the representative newspaper of his Church, "must satisfy all the parties who enter into the enterprise, or else it had better not be undertaken. It hardly seems wise for only one of these parties to set forth even a 'tentative' symbol before it has been requested to undertake such a work."* This protest is just.

* *The Christian Intelligencer* for June 8, 1892, p. 2.

We must hasten to assure our brethren of the Reformed Church and of the other Churches concerned, that the Assembly is in no way responsible for this discourtesy. The Assembly did not appoint a committee to form a "consensus creed" to submit to other Churches, but "to invite the coöperation of the other Churches to prepare a creed." According to the text of the action of the Assembly, it raises a Committee of nine, "who shall invite the coöperation of the Reformed Churches throughout the world, holding the Presbyterian system, to prepare a short creed containing the essential articles of the Westminster Confession, to be used as the common creed of these Churches; not as a substitute for the creed of any particular denomination, but to supplement it for the common work of the Church, especially in mission fields."* It is impossible to read this as a license, much less as an instruction, to prepare such a creed in draft, apart from the coöperation of the Churches. The Assembly owes it to its own dignity, and to the demands of courtesy towards the sister denominations, to make it clear to them that the Committee has fallen into error in this procedure.

A word further is necessary as to the creed itself which, in these not altogether pleasant circumstances, the Committee has prepared. It assuredly will not command the "consensus" of our own Church; and it is to be hoped neither will it gain the consent of many of our sister Churches. The Chairman says of it: "It adheres closely to the spirit and frequently to the verbal forms of the Westminster Standards." It may be more truly said that it revolutionizes the spirit of the Westminster Standards, while yet using their verbal forms quite extensively. The *Westminster Confession* is a typical Calvinistic document; the proposed "consensus creed" makes the most emphatic statement of the Salmurian modifications of Calvinism ever given credal expression. Its Article vi is a very emphatic assertion of mediate imputation—a doctrine never held by more than a small minority of Calvinists and certainly not according to the spirit of the *Confession*. Its Article vii is an emphatic assertion of the Salmurian theory of the order of decrees, reversing the order of the *Confession*. In its Article vii, this effort to state the Saumur doctrine with emphasis overreaches itself and passes into pure Universalism; for if it be true that Christ, "being made under the law as the substitute for sinners, fulfilled all its demands, and endured the penalty of the law," it would be hard if, after this, any sinners had to fulfill the law's demands or endure its penalty for themselves. There is much confusion in the subsequent articles; especially in Article xi, on Regeneration. On the whole, we may congratulate ourselves that this creed has no right to exist.

It is a pleasure to turn from the doctrinal work of Committees which we cannot approve, to the admirable and thoroughly satisfactory interpretation of the doctrinal standards of the Church on the great

* *Minutes*, 1890, p. 87.

question of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, which the Assembly was led to give in answer to certain overtures from Presbyteries. The text of this weighty deliverance, to which certain needed instructions to the office-bearers and Presbyteries were appended, is as follows :

The General Assembly would remind all under its care that it is a fundamental doctrine that the Old and New Testaments are the inspired and infallible Word of God. Our Church holds that the inspired Word, as it came from God, is without error. The assertion of the contrary cannot but shake the confidence of the people in the sacred books. All who enter office in our Church solemnly profess to receive them as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

If they change their belief on this point, Christian honor demands that they should withdraw from our ministry. They have no right to use the pulpit or the chair of the professor for the dissemination of their errors until they are dealt with by the slow process of discipline. But if any do so act, their Presbyteries should speedily interpose and deal with them for a violation of ordination vows. The vow taken at the beginning is obligatory until the party taking it is honorably and properly released. The General Assembly enjoins upon all ministers, elders and Presbyteries to be faithful to the duty here imposed.

The doctrinal statement here as to the inerrancy of the Scriptures is simply the official interpretation by the Church's supreme court of the teaching of our Standards. It does not add an iota to the doctrine of those Standards. They teach in plain language that "all the books of the Old and New Testament" are "the Word of God written," in the originals "immediately inspired by God," who is "the Author thereof;" so that "a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein."* As the

* The odd efforts that have been made to interpret verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture out of the *Westminster Confession* have, of course, been unsuccessful ; they are especially absurd in the face of the historical position of the framers of the *Confession*, and the demonstrable meaning to them of the terms they employ. Dr. Briggs has, indeed, committed himself to the despairing contention that the Westminster men did not believe in verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of Scripture. The misinterpretation to which he has subjected their language in his attempts to make this contention plausible, has been pointed out by the present writer in *The Independent* for Dec. 5, 1889, through an examination of the passages brought together in *Whither?* pp. 66 sq. and 70 sq. A similar examination of the passages from early writers in support of the presence of "errors" in Scripture, brought together in Dr. Briggs' latest book, *The Bible, the Church and the Reason* (pp. 215 sq.), will show that they, too, rest simply on misinterpretation of the authors quoted. So much has been made of the mistakenly alleged freedom of Luther and Calvin in admitting errors in Scripture as it came from God, that we have sought from competent hands, and hope soon to publish, fresh studies, from the sources, of Luther's and Calvin's doctrine of Inspiration ; in these papers the error of these allegations is demonstrated. Meanwhile, we pause only to express our regret that Dr. Schaff, in our present number (p. 467 above), repeats this mistake as to Calvin, basing his contention on the quotation of two passages, both of which are found, on examination, to concern errors of *copyists* only (not of the autographs), and neither of which, therefore, can furnish a foundation for the assertion made on their credit. In both passages Calvin uses the technical language of the textual critic, as is

outgoing Moderator (Dr. W. H. Green) said, in his admirable sermon : " If God says it, it is true. If God enjoins it, it is right, no matter what sense or reason may suggest to the contrary. This absolute submission of ourselves with implicit confidence to the guidance of the Most High is a fundamental requisite of true discipleship."* By this timely declaration as to the sense of the Standards on an important matter, the Assembly has made a very long step towards clearing the air in the doctrinal disputes now raising themselves in the Church as to the inspiration, authority and trustworthiness of the Scriptures. Not as if it had defined the issue between the Church and the radical form of criticism to be upon the bare point of the inerrancy of Scripture. That issue cuts across the Church's doctrine of the Scriptures at a very much higher and more vital point than this ; it is not the inerrancy of the Bible alone which the radical criticism endangers, but its historical trustworthiness as a record of a historical religion, its divine origin and character in any appreciable sense.† But it is equally important that the Church's position should be made alike plain with that of " advanced " criticism, in order that the wideness of the gulf that yawns between the two may become more apparent. The Church holds to the inerrancy of the Bible as given by God and as His Word ; the radical criticism not only finds the Bible filled with minor errors, but even undermines its general trustworthiness as a historical record of a historically delivered religion. These views cannot, by any *finesse*, be made to appear to agree.

There is only one doctrine more fundamental to Christian theologizing, or to the Christian life, than the trustworthiness of the Scriptures ; and that is the absolute trustworthiness of Christ as our Teacher and Guide. The old rationalism looked upon Christ as nothing more than a Teacher and an Example. The newer rationalism—which is more subtle and more common in its practical manifestations than we sometimes think—will not allow Him to be even a thoroughly trustworthy Teacher and Example. Our readers can scarcely have glanced over the account given by Prof. Gretillat, in this number of the REVIEW, of the painful controversy as to the limits of Christ's authority as a teacher, now raging among

easily shown from comparison of his similar language elsewhere ; and it is difficult to explain how Dr. Schaff can offer the words, " he suggests that Stephen or Luke drew upon ancient traditions rather than upon Moses, and made ' a mistake in the name of Abraham, ' " as a representation of Calvin's words: *in nomine Abrahamæ erratum esse palam est. . . . Quare hic locus corrigendus est.* The accurate rendering of this language (remembering the principle so strongly insisted on by Edward Thring, that the strong verb in Latin becomes the strong noun in English) is this : " There is obviously a corruption in the name Abraham. . . . An emendation is accordingly in place here." The wish must not be allowed to be the father to the thought, in historical investigations.

* We quote from the report in *The Occident* for May 25, 1892, p. 4.

† See what Dr. Chambers says in reviewing Dr. Driver's recent book : above, pp. 522, 523.

the French-speaking Protestants, without the deepest concern. It has not become so bad as that among us as yet. In America, men at large as yet yield to their Lord the theoretical homage of their minds and hearts. He is still proclaimed as our perfect Teacher, every word of whom we theoretically recognize as true; our perfect Example, every act of whom we theoretically recognize as right; to follow hard after whom, in His teaching and example, is to be a perfect theologian and a perfect man. But rationalism is very subtle. Usually it enters first our conduct—involved in some act which it seems to us right to do; and then it enters our mind in an attempt to justify this act. So the radical critic first takes up views of the Old Testament which are not his Lord's; and then he doubts whether our Teacher is a perfect teacher in matters of the criticism, of the interpretation and of the inspiration of the Old Testament. So, too, we may take up a view in ethics which will clash with our Lord's; and at once the question is involved—though we may not see it at once—whether our Example is a perfect example in the sphere of morals. These remarks are suggested by a much to be regretted clause in the report to the Assembly by the Committee on Temperance, concerning the use of so-called unfermented wine in the Lord's Supper, and a more to be regretted action of the Assembly in refusing to disapprove it. We must not set ourselves against our Lord's perfect example. And we must not sophisticate ourselves into contending that we do not do this, when we reverse His practice, on moral grounds. The need of the world is not a better morality than Christ's, but CHRIST HIMSELF, the Righteousness of God. And as a Church we need to take our stand in simplicity of heart beside Him; beside Him in everything, whether in doctrine or in practice. "We need," says an eloquent servant of this our common Teacher and Example,* "a ministry that believes in Jesus Christ. I mean by this a ministry that *believes* in Jesus Christ against the whole world; that not merely believes that Jesus Christ is a power, or even a great power, but that *all* power in heaven and earth is His. . . . This is the ministry we need—one not afraid, as has been well said, to step out in the deep blue of God's promise and trust where the whole world derides; not afraid to stake the awful inviolability of Christ's Word against the despair of a nation, and to rejoice in sunlight where the world sees only the blackness of the storm."

PRINCETON.

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* The Right Rev. M. S. Baldwin, D.D., Bishop of Huron, in *Papers on Preaching*, pp. 9-10 (F. H. Revell, 1888).